

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A method of preventing whole fish from browning or darkening, which comprises treating the whole fish with an aqueous alkali solution of a compound selected from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide, calcium hydroxide, calcium oxide, magnesium carbonate, ammonium carbonate, sodium carbonate, sodium hydrogen carbonate, potassium hydrogen carbonate, and combinations thereof and then washing off or neutralizing the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated whole fish, wherein the treating is performed at a temperature of from 0 to 10°C in the absence of peroxide or chlorine.

2. (currently amended) A method of preparing whole fish protected from browning or darkening, which comprises treating the whole fish having browned or darkened skin with an aqueous alkali solution of a compound selected from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide, calcium hydroxide, calcium oxide, magnesium carbonate, ammonium carbonate, sodium carbonate, sodium hydrogen carbonate, potassium hydrogen carbonate, and combinations thereof and then washing off or neutralizing the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated whole fish, wherein the treating is performed at a temperature of from 0 to 10°C in the absence of peroxide or chlorine.

3. (currently amended) A method of preparing a food containing raw fry which comprises treating the raw fry with an aqueous alkali solution of a compound selected from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide, calcium hydroxide, calcium oxide, magnesium carbonate, ammonium carbonate, sodium carbonate, sodium hydrogen carbonate, potassium hydrogen carbonate, and combinations thereof, then washing off or

neutralizing the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated fry, and treating the fry with a seasoning, wherein the treating is performed at a temperature of from 0 to 10°C in the absence of peroxide or chlorine.

4. (currently amended) A food containing raw fry which is prepared by treating the raw fry with an aqueous alkali solution of a compound selected from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide, calcium hydroxide, calcium oxide, magnesium carbonate, ammonium carbonate, sodium carbonate, sodium hydrogen carbonate, potassium hydrogen carbonate, and combinations thereof to prevent darkening or browning of the raw fry, then washing off or neutralizing the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated raw fry and treating the fry with a seasoning, wherein the treating is performed at a temperature of from 0 to 10°C in the absence of peroxide or chlorine.

5. (currently amended) A method of preparing fry free from browning or darkening from browned or darkened raw fry, which comprises treating the browned or darkened fry with an aqueous alkali solution of a compound selected from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide, calcium hydroxide, calcium oxide, magnesium carbonate, ammonium carbonate, sodium carbonate, sodium hydrogen carbonate, potassium hydrogen carbonate, and combinations thereof and then washing off or neutralizing the aqueous alkali solution attached to the fry, wherein the treating is performed at a temperature of from 0 to 10°C in the absence of peroxide or chlorine.

6. (currently amended) Fry free from browning or darkening, which are obtained by treating browned or darkened raw fry with an aqueous alkali solution of a compound selected

from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide, calcium hydroxide, calcium oxide, magnesium carbonate, ammonium carbonate, sodium carbonate, sodium hydrogen carbonate, potassium hydrogen carbonate, and combinations thereof and then washing off or neutralizing the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated raw fry, wherein the treating is performed at a temperature of from 0 to 10°C in the absence of peroxide or chlorine.

7. (previously presented) A method of treating a whole fish, wherein the whole fish is immersed in a solution of from 0.1 to 6.0% salt water at a temperature no greater than 10°C for a time of from 30 minutes to 24 hours before treating the whole fish according to the method of Claim 1.

8. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the aqueous alkaline solution has a pH of higher than 7.0.

9. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the whole fish are treated with the aqueous alkali solution from 1 minute to 24 hours at a temperature of from 0 to 10°C.

10. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the aqueous alkaline solution further comprises any one additive selected from the group consisting of saccharides, salts, and combinations thereof.

11. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the time for the washing off of the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated whole fish is from 1 minute to 24 hours.

12. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the neutralizing of the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated whole fish comprises spraying the alkali-treated whole fish with an acidic solution at a pH of from 4.0 to 6.6.

13. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 12, wherein the acidic solution comprises any one selected from the group consisting of inorganic acid, organic acid, and combinations thereof.

14. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the neutralizing of the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated whole fish comprises immersing the alkali-treated whole fish in an acidic solution at a pH of from 4.0 to 6.8.

15. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 14, wherein the acidic solution comprises any one selected from the group consisting of inorganic acid, organic acid, and combinations thereof.

16. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the neutralizing of the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated whole fish is performed during the course of boiling the whole fish in a solution of from 1 to 10% salt water by mass.

17. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 1, further comprising any one of the steps selected from the group consisting of treating the whole fish with salt water, boiling the whole fish, draining the whole fish, cooling the whole fish, directly packing the whole fish in bags, and combinations thereof after the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated whole fish is washed or neutralized.

18. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 1, further comprising treating the whole fish with a solution comprising from 1 to 5% salt water for a time from 10 minutes to 5 hours at a temperature not greater than 10°C;
washing the whole fish with water;
draining the whole fish; and
drying the whole fish

wherein the treating, washing, draining and drying is performed after the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated whole fish is washed or neutralized.

19. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the whole fish is boiled at a temperature from 90 to 100°C for a time of from 1 to 10 minutes.

20. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the aqueous alkali solution does not contain hydrogen peroxide.

21. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 2, wherein the aqueous alkali solution does not contain hydrogen peroxide.

22. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 3, wherein the aqueous alkali solution does not contain hydrogen peroxide.

23. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 4, wherein the aqueous alkali solution does not contain hydrogen peroxide.

24. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 5, wherein the aqueous alkali solution does not contain hydrogen peroxide.

25. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 6, wherein the aqueous alkali solution does not contain hydrogen peroxide.

26. (previously presented) The fry according to Claim 6, comprising a reduced loss of shape or body dripping during storage of the fry.

27. (currently amended) A method of preventing whole fish from browning or darkening, which comprises treating the whole fish with an aqueous alkali solution of a compound selected from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide, calcium hydroxide, calcium oxide, magnesium carbonate, ammonium carbonate, sodium carbonate, sodium hydrogen carbonate, potassium hydrogen carbonate, and combinations thereof and then washing off or neutralizing the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated whole fish, wherein the whole fish originally has a white skin, wherein the treating is performed at a temperature of from 0 to 10°C in the absence of peroxide or chlorine.

28. (New) A method of preventing whole fish from browning or darkening, which comprises treating the whole fish with an aqueous alkali solution of a compound selected from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide, calcium hydroxide, calcium oxide, magnesium carbonate, ammonium carbonate, sodium carbonate, sodium hydrogen carbonate, potassium hydrogen carbonate, and combinations thereof and then washing off or neutralizing the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated whole fish, wherein the neutralizing of the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated whole fish is performed during the course of boiling the whole fish in a solution of from 1 to 10% salt water by mass.